

The West Wing Weekly
3.06: "Gone Quiet"

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

C.J.: [Right Said Fred, "I'm Too Sexy" song excerpt] *I'm too sexy for my shirt, too sexy for my skirt, too sexy for the other... thing.*

[end excerpt]

[Intro Music]

JOSH: Welcome back. You're once again listening to The West Wing Weekly. I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Today, we're talking about episode six of season three. It's called, "Gone Quiet".

JOSH: [Whispers] Gone Quiet. [chuckles] The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin, the story by Julia Dahl and Laura Glasser, and it was directed by Jon Hutman. Hrish, how do we know Jon Hutman?

HRISHI: Jon Hutman is a production designer, I believe.

JOSH: Yeah, interesting. He doesn't seem to have a very long... he has a remarkable CV as a production designer, not a long resume as far as directing. So, I'd be curious to know if there's a little story behind it, and he seems to have done a very good job with it.

HRISHI: Yeah. Here's a little synopsis about the episode before we jump into our discussion. C.J. learns that the House Speaker was asked, "Why do you want to be president?" and he blows the answer. Sam's battling Bruno and Connie on the issue of soft money and whether or not the re-election campaign should take advantage of it. The First Lady and Oliver Babish discuss how she's the biggest liability in Congress' investigation into the President's MS scandal. Toby debates the merits of the National Endowment of the Arts with an Appropriations Committee member who wants to eliminate its funding. And the president, Leo, Nancy, and Albie Duncan ponder what do about a submarine that's incommunicado, or... [Whispers] gone quiet... just two miles from the coast of North Korea.

JOSH: There it is. Not a lot of action on camera this episode.

HRISHI: But a lot of comedy.

JOSH: Yes, starting with C.J.'s singing and dancing.

HRISHI: I really think this is one of the funnier episodes that we've watched so far.

JOSH: I'm gonna disagree with you on that, because I think there's a comic subplot that I don't love.

HRISHI: Hmm...

JOSH: That we'll get to shortly. Although I do love singing and dancing C.J., and that whole thread. And that that's the soundtrack to her gloating over the... over that poor answer to the question. And I also love that we get a really meaty Carol scene.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Props to Melissa Fitz, who's terrific in that opening scene with C.J.

HRISHI: And I love the... just the little dance that C.J. does after Carol tells her that he's blown the answer.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

C.J.: Wait a second, are you telling me he got the question?

CAROL: It was a train wreck. I recognize all the words...

C.J.: Get me a transcript.

Carol: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She just stands in her office for a second and just does a little wiggle.

JOSH: Yes [laughs]. It's subtle and very, very funny. Very Allison. Yeah, it's a great moment.

HRISHI: The part that made me laugh the hardest at this episode is also a wordless moment. When Leo goes in to talk to the president about the submarine in very small, easy to understand words, like he is a child. At one point, he says...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

LEO: Well, as you know with our ships, our boats, and our submarines, we keep in pretty close touch with radar, sonar, satellites, radio...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: As he's saying this, the president turns very slowly to Charlie and just gives him a look.

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah. No, no. I know, what you're talking about, but this, alas, to me is the comic subplot that doesn't work for me.

HRISHI: Oh my gosh. You didn't... that look made me laugh. Just the...

JOSH: Yeah. No. I appreciate the execution of all the moments. Here's what bothers me about it. I feel like President Bartlet has been re-cast as a buffoon. Although we've seen his character develop from military dilettante...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And we've seen him go from feeling really out of his league when it comes to being in the Sit Room and having to make the kinds of decisions that he must as Commander in Chief, but we've seen him develop to the point where I can't believe Leo's talking to him like he's a baby. Like, it's funny, but to me...

HRISHI: Right. No, I totally understand what you're saying.

JOSH: Yeah, that bugged me throughout, even though I get that on its terms this would be funny, but I feel that it's not really true to the Bartlet we've come to know.

HRISHI: Because they've developed this idea already dramatically in seasons past, and now they're returning to... they're like regressing, just for the comedy.

JOSH: Right. Exactly. We're going to a little time machine so we can have one funny episode about how the President doesn't know anything about the military.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And you know, even to the point where in the Sit Room initially when Leo is apprised of the situation by Nancy, she actually almost suggests that he not take it to the President because he's gonna panic.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

LEO: I've gotta tell the president.

NANCY: The president is gonna hit the panic button, Leo. If the Portland went quiet it's 'cause someone's sitting on top of them. These guys know what they're doing.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's some very high stakes, the idea of actually keeping a piece of information this vital and this urgent from the Commander in Chief.

HRISHI: Well that's the thing, is it vital and is it urgent, or is it just a matter of course? That's I think, what it hinges on. If it's not vital then there's no reason to get... to bring it to the President because it's just a thing that's gonna happen.

JOSH: Right, but something's going on. She's in the Sit Room and the NSC has been convened and it's important enough to tell Leo about.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And the President Bartlet we're suddenly presented with in this episode is someone you keep information from because you can't talk to him rationally, and he's not gonna look at the different options, and you can't say to him, "Hey, the chances are that this submarine has gone quiet intentionally."

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And it's just, I don't buy that President Bartlet.

HRISHI: I also wonder if there's a possibility where like, in the look that the president gives Charlie, I think part of it is an acknowledgment of the evolution that he has had. That he's like, "I've been doing the job now for two years, I've gone through all of this stuff, this guy's still talking to me like I don't know anything."

JOSH: Like that regression...and do you accept that as a Leo – Bartlet relationship?

HRISHI: I mean, I totally understand why you say that. And I felt that too, like where I was like, what happened to, you know, now I thought the president was kind of cool with all this stuff and cool with people's under... sense that he understands. But I also understood, in my experience I used to be late for things a lot when I was in, like, high school and college. So much so that it kind of became a running thing with my friends. Like, Hrish's late, like, big surprise. But I realized, like, what a terrible trait that was, like, how annoying it must be for my friends, and I tried very hard to become punctual. And it's still something that I think about all the time, you know. And I try to be early to things, I try and over-compensate so that nobody has to criticize me for that thing again. But like, for at least a couple years in there when I really felt like I had solved the issue and made progress, there would be comments here and there. Or you know, if I was a couple minutes – there... it was hard to escape the reputation, even though my behavior had actually changed. And so, I kind of, buy the idea that like, you can evolve past what people's image of you is.

JOSH: Yeah, so you're positing that it's really in the people surrounding Bartlet, and their treatment of him, but my counter is that in that Oval Office scene, with Leo and President Bartlet, and Albie Duncan, I think the president is presented to us as a little bit of a buffoon.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: And if they were in trouble, you see, they wouldn't send a distress signal because they might be detected and submariners have a different set of criteria when assessing risk versus reward.

LEO: He knows.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Ok, I'll just stand over there.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So, it's not in the people surrounding him, I think we are given a President Bartlet that is too different from the President Bartlet we've come to know.

HRISHI: All right, again, I don't know if this is just me. I'm an apologist for all these things or that I've drunk the Kool-Aid.

JOSH: You're a subject of the Kool-Aid

HRISHI: Exactly. I have been subject of the Kool-Aid. I think again there it's more like the president is just on his heels a little bit because of the relationship, the dynamic that already exists between Albie Duncan and him.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

BARTLET: He's going to scold me. He's been at the State Department since Truman. He thinks that I'm a kid, and that he outranks me.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Albie Duncan will never take him seriously, so he takes every opportunity to try and assert any kind of authority, but he's just off his game because this guy intimidates him a little bit.

JOSH: I don't subject myself of that Kool-Aid [laughs].

HRISHI: That's fine. That part where the president turns to Charlie in Leo's address though... I almost wish [laughs] ...instead of turning to Charlie, he just looked into the camera.

JOSH: [Laughs] That I would've appreciated.

HRISHI: It reminds of *Trading Places*, the Eddie Murphy movie. There's a moment in *Trading Places* where Eddie Murphy's character is getting an explanation of what commodities are, and then... [laughs] do you know the part I'm talking about?

JOSH: No. Does he have a take to the camera?

HRISHI: Oh yeah. They're like...

[Trading Places excerpt]

SPEAKER: Now, what are commodities? Commodities are agricultural products, like coffee that you had for breakfast, wheat which is used to make bread, pork bellies, which is used to make bacon, which you might find on a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And on that line, the BLT line, Eddie Murphy turns and looks right into the camera, like breaks the fourth wall and it's my favorite part.

JOSH: That's fantastic. I'm all for it, that's funny. I'll have to go back and watch that.

HRISHI: It's the best part of a great movie. But yeah, I was a little annoyed with Leo too. Like, come on. But it was funny, I thought it was funny.

JOSH: Well, you were wrong [laughs].

HRISHI: I also thought Oliver and the First Lady, their whole exchange was funny, even the way he says...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

OLIVER: I read La Monde, was it in La Monde?

ABBEY: I don't know, I don't read La Monde.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes [laughs]. There is a kind of dueling French accent aspect to that scene. I liked that. I liked his line about having been thrown out of bars too.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

ABBEY: You should be careful, Oliver. You keep talking like a person, they're going to kick you out of the Bar.

OLIVER: I've been kicked out of bars before.

ABBEY: I meant...

OLIVER: I know what you meant.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Oh, yeah. Yeah [laughs]. I liked their two-man show.

JOSH: Yeah, no. I liked all their scenes together, too. It's an interesting question. I mean, did we know before this that she had written prescriptions for the president in her name?

HRISHI: I feel like that had come up.

JOSH: I can't remember whether that had dropped yet.

HRISHI: I remember in season two, in "18th and Potomac", Oliver says to the First Lady...

[West Wing Episode 2.21 excerpt]

OLIVER: Then almost four years ago, you put him interferon beta-1b.

ABBEY: Yeah.

OLIVER: Betaseron.

ABBEY: Yeah.

OLIVER: You did it, not Vikram.

ABBEY: It was in consultation with Vikram.

OLIVER: But Vikram didn't write the prescription...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But it didn't say she wrote them out in her, you know.

JOSH: Right, they both I think, kind of, make light of it. As if to say that the public may not be so upset about that as the man who breaks a window to, you know, get the prescription that his

wife needs. But we're talking about a doctor prescribing pills or medicine in her name for her husband, the president. I don't know, it struck me as, this is serious, this is very serious. She is in hot water, and I like that they're sort of uniting in their attempt the fight the idea of criminalizing her behavior as a way to get at the president.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Which you can't otherwise do. Although at the same time, I was thinking she probably deserves some sort of consequences for the actions she's taken.

HRISHI: Yeah, absolutely. And in the end, it's almost like Oliver's arguing against it and Abigail's saying no.

JOSH: Yeah, and here's some consequences I can offer them in a deal.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah, you're right, there's some interesting, subtle shifts in positions.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's one weird thing that Oliver says. He says...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

OLIVER: You're not a medical expert. You didn't keep records, you violated medical practices in three states, and most importantly, you're his wife. Which is a violation of the AMA's code of ethics.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I get the last ones, but the first one, he says, "You're not a medical expert."

JOSH: Oh yeah, I bumped on that too.

HRISHI: Yeah, but maybe he meant she's not a medical expert in the area of MS? But it seemed like a strange line.

JOSH: Yeah, I know. I expected her to say, "Woah, slow down. You know I'm a doctor, right? We started this, remember? At the beginning of this scene, when we talked about how I'm a medical expert." Yeah, I know I thought that was odd as well, yeah.

HRISHI: There was another little line that was kind of strange. That there was an exchange between Sam and Bruno, when they're talking about soft money stuff, and I understood what he was saying but the way that the exchange was constructed, it had a funny antecedent.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

SAM: How could the President be opposed to soft money one year and then take it the next? Where's he gonna be on campaign finance reform tomorrow?

BRUNO: Exactly where he is today, leading the charge against it.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I'm fairly certain what Bruno meant was, leading the charge against soft money. But the sentence right before was, but what he's actually responding to is, where is he going to be on campaign finance, and it sounds like Bruno's saying, he's leading the charge against campaign finance reform, which he's not.

JOSH: You're right, I also had a moment trying to reconcile that. I think you're exactly right.

HRISHI: He's responding to the second-to-last sentence that Sam said.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: But there's a question in the last sentence and when he answers that, it sounds like it's the opposite of what he means.

JOSH: Which I guess people do.

HRISHI: Sure.

JOSH: I mean, people do speak that way, but you're right. I also had a moment there. I thought, "Is that what he means?"

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean we misspeak all the time. But hey, they say if you have a glass house, you know better than anyone how effective a glass stone... how effective a stone can be.

[Laughs]

JOSH Boom.

HRISHI: I misspoke even there. This episode is a source of maybe the most reused, reusable, perennial, evergreen GIF from *The West Wing*, which is the President banging his head against his desk.

JOSH: Oh yes, that's a funny moment.

HRISHI: I feel like more people have seen that GIF than have seen *The West Wing*.

JOSH: Yeah, I'm very familiar with the GIF. I would not have been able to tell you it was from this episode.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Now I know.

HRISHI: Should we talk about the Trump-ai-yi-yi elephant in the room?

JOSH: Well, there were a couple, but go for it. Yes.

HRISHI: For me, the big one was the NEA.

JOSH: Yeah, for me, it was the NEA, and also the idea of diplomacy with regard to North Korea.

HRISHI: Ha, right of course, yeah.

JOSH: [Laughs] There were definitely some... two major Trump-ai-yi-yi plots going.

HRISHI: Of course. The North Korean diplomacy one of course... but even the fact that there was one degree or half a degree of separation, I wasn't thinking about it because it was so eclipsed for me by the 100 percent correlation [laughs] of the elimination of the NEA...

JOSH: But before we dig into that, did you spot the Hrishikesh-ai-yi-yi moment?

HRISHI: [Laughs] No, what was that?

JOSH: For me, that was Toby saying...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

TOBY: By and large, I'm not wild about musicals.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [Laughs] Is that a Hrishi-ai-yi-yi or more of a, Hrishi...Toby...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Well, whenever I contemplate your distaste for the American Musical Theatre genre, I have a Hrishi-ai-yi-yi moment.

HRISHI: Oh, but see, people listening to this right now are having a Josh-ai-yi-yi, I believe, because they will say that – because this has been said to me in criticism of my stance – Musical Theatre is not a genre; it is a medium.

JOSH: Musical Theatre is not... American Musical Theatre isn't a genre?

HRISHI: I guess so, yeah. This is a position that has been articulated to me. That there's a sense that just having songs in a play that are sung on stage is not a genre, because it's a such diverse medium.

JOSH: All right, my head hurts too much to... I'm just gonna relent on that, I guess. I'm just gonna assume I'm wrong.

HRISHI: But I think the thing that I dislike is the genre.

JOSH: I'm gonna look up what genre means [laughs].

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: All right.

HRISHI: I think the genre is the thing that I object to. The [singing] everybody sing a dance... Sing a dance? [Laughs] Or like, I don't know, what's my scene? Give me a set up here, Josh.

JOSH: What do you mean?

HRISHI: I'm gonna improvise a musical here for you.

JOSH: Are you really?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Oh, wow.

HRISHI: Give me a scenario.

JOSH: Two podcast hosts disagree strenuously about an episode [laughs].

HRISHI: [Piano music, laughter] All right so then... you know, Josh, sometimes when I think about why I dislike musicals, [singing] I have to say this is so stupid. And I'm gonna sing like this, and do jazz hands...

JOSH: [singing] I totally get it, because sometimes your emotions [falsetto] are too big for speaking. Get out. Come on... [end singing] Sometimes...

HRISHI: [Laughs] Did you say that your emotions are...

JOSH: ...too big for merely speaking.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: That's my rock opera version of...

HRISHI: Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: Do you not like opera? Some emotions, some situations are beyond the spoken word. We have to go to that other, ineffable part of our brains that wants to express itself in song.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean I'm a writer of songs. I totally agree with that.

JOSH: I know, that's the thing that always kills me, is that I love The One AM Radio, I love your work, I love your voice, I love the songs that you write. And you said to yourself at some point, "I'm going to sit down, and express what it's like to come across a photograph of an old lover, and I'm not gonna write a poem about it, or rather, I am gonna write a poem about it but rather than reading that to the public, I feel like I have to set it to music and sing it."

[*An Old Photo of Your New Lover* by The One AM Radio excerpt]

HRISHI: [sung] *An old photo of your new lover that you discovered in a book she left...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And then there's this brilliant song as a result, but you don't like the mixture of the two.

HRISHI: No, no. That's why I think my objection really is the genre. I think that there is a genre of Musical Theatre, like the way the actual music sounds, like the melodic choices, the rhythmic choice. the performance choices, and that's what really gets on my nerves. Less the idea that someone's on a stage and they're speaking and then suddenly they bust into song, because there's plenty of examples where I actually enjoy that, specific examples. But like the music in *Chicago*, the music in *Cats*, I think that a lot of that stuff feels schmaltzy to me, in a way that it doesn't have the emotional resonance that it's supposed to. It doesn't connect with me.

JOSH: But then all you're saying is that you don't like what you find to be bad Musical Theatre.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: But I don't get that from you. I get that you don't like Musical Theatre or that you just feel that 99 per cent...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yes.

JOSH: ...of what you're exposed to.

HRISHI: It's not a categorical dislike, it's just that there are so many specific examples that I dislike. That it's easier to say I don't like the genre, or the medium, or whatever.

JOSH: Ah. This makes me actually want to pursue next what we've joked about, which is a podcast called 'Hrishi Hruins a Musical.'

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: And maybe I could expose you... I mean, I think we'd go from millions of downloads a month to somewhere between a hundred and four hundred, but nonetheless, it might be a worthwhile...I want to take you to Musical Theatre, find what it is you like.

HRISHI: Yeah, I'm absolutely open to the idea that there are musicals out there that I would like, because I like the songs. I mean there are musicals out there that I like because I like the songs.

JOSH: Right, but that's it... it's got to be beyond that. The cast album is one thing and then sitting and watching the scenes in between that lead to the songs and getting the book and the full experience is another. I mean, that's... I'm curious, I'm guessing you don't like the original cast album of *Cats*?

HRISHI: I've never listened to it.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: I just, you know...

JOSH: Is there a cast album that you like and then you've seen the production? You've also...the truth is you haven't seen lot of Musical Theatre, right?

HRISHI: No, no. Really not at all.

JOSH: I think we gotta do it.

HRISHI: I'm open to going, it's just sometimes...like *Rent*, for example.

JOSH: Uh huh.

HRISHI: People love *Rent*... it's not for me.

JOSH: You know what, I didn't like *Rent*.

HRISHI: Yeah?

JOSH: I've never felt older and more like a Republican than when I went to see *Rent*, and I like a lot of the songs in it.

[“Seasons of Love” from *Rent* excerpt]

CAST OF RENT: Five-hundred, twenty-five thousand, six-hundred minutes

Five-hundred, twenty-five thousand, moments so dear

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I get tingles, it brings tears to my eyes. When I saw the actual show, I was like, “Ugh, these dirty kids, go get a real job and actually rent the place, you and your squatting.” So, that didn't appeal to me.

HRISHI: I mean, I haven't actually seen the thing, I'm saying, it's not for me, but I haven't seen it. The reason I didn't watch it, is because the songs. I like, heard one song and I was like, “Phew, this is just so cheesy.”

JOSH: Do you not like, “Seasons of Love”?

HRISHI: I don't know if I know that one.

JOSH: Oh, come on. You're gonna have to... I want you to listen to it.

HRISHI: I think my way in is gonna be... it might have to be that I have to like, love a song first from it before I agree to watch it? I don't know, I'm open to it.

JOSH: All right.

HRISHI: I'm open to it, but I'm just saying that there are very few exceptions where there's a musical that I really enjoy, but they definitely exist.

JOSH: How many musicals have you seen in your life?

HRISHI: You mean like, onstage in a theatre setting?

JOSH: No, I mean at home in your closet. [Laughter] Do you know what a musical is, and do you know what seeing a musical means?

HRISHI: Most of my experience with musicals is film adaptations, movie musicals.

JOSH: Ok, that's very different. That may be, I'm not sure... it's either a genre or [laughs]... I don't know what that is any more. I've lost command of English. But yeah ok, musicals are very different and I would argue that there are some brilliant ones... *Cabaret* comes to mind, it is difficult to adapt a great stage musical to film.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It's been done many times, but there are a lot of disappointing movie musicals.

HRISHI: Right. So maybe a huge asterisk needs to be placed next to every statement I say about musicals, because these are opinions formed by movies.

JOSH: Yeah well, I would bet so. I mean to me...look a close up of someone breaking into song I think feels very different to me from sitting in a theatre hearing a person actually vocalize and also having little bit of distance from them, like, it's a big thing.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah.

JOSH: And it looks sometimes, over the top in a movie in a way where it feels more organic, I think, often live.

HRISHI: Mm hmm. You know, I've been in the orchestra pit for two musicals.

JOSH: Which were those?

HRISHI: *Hair*.

JOSH: Mm hmm.

HRISHI: At Yale.

JOSH: Oh.

HRISHI: And *Starmites* at the Higgins Middle School in Peabody, Massachusetts.

JOSH: Uh, *Hair* at Yale, with nudity?

[Pause]

Wow. If it's that long a pause, I hope the answer is no, there was no nudity.

HRISHI: [Laughs] I don't remember, I don't remember. I was backstage, I never saw it.

JOSH: Oh, ok. Well I thought you were in the pit, I think you could just look up.

HRISHI: I mean...

JOSH: Which might have been too graphic [laughter].

HRISHI: It wasn't that kind of pit.

JOSH: Boom. Ok, and were you a fan of either of those shows?

HRISHI: I think the music in *Hair* is quite good.

JOSH: You know what, I think *Hair's* a pretty good movie musical. Have you seen it?

HRISHI: I haven't seen it.

JOSH: You should.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: All right. Well, that was a good... I want more people to weigh in, I think we should...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] No.

JOSH: [crosstalk] ...put together...

HRISHI: Please don't @ with your musical opinions [laughs].

JOSH: Ok, but on the website, let's put together a list of shows that I should take Hrishu to for "Hrishu Hruins a Musical". I'm going to see *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway in a week. Very excited, have you heard of it?

HRISHI: I have not.

JOSH: Oh. Tony nominated. I'm going to see Ben Platt and the others from the original cast and I'm very, very, very excited.

HRISHI: Awesome. How about Dear Evan Handler, why aren't you in this episode?

JOSH: You know what, I have referred to that musical as Dear Evan Handler like nine times because I've got my wires crossed.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Where is Doug in this episode? We've got Bruno and Connie, but...

JOSH: Yeah, I thought that was interesting. My guess is he was working on something else.

HRISHI: He had a job.

JOSH: Yeah, probably. Dear Evan Handler might have been playing Dr. Crazy in the Dr. Crazy episode of *Ed* when this filmed, because that is his only other... oh no, he also played Shrug in *It's Like, You Know...*, the TV series of the 2000s... no, I'm gonna guess that this week, he was shooting an episode of *Ed*.

HRISHI: Hmm... back to the NEA?

JOSH: Yeah, back to the NEA.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

CONGRESSWOMAN: "Slut" is a one-word poem by Jules Waltz. It's stamped in scarlet on a piece of 40x40 black canvas. Here's a woman who gets naked, covers herself completely in chocolate, and sings. Does that appeal to you?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So, Trump-ai-yi-yi. Trump would like to, in fact do away with the NEA, but thus far, he has failed to do so, as the budget that was just recently passed includes funding.

HRISHI: True.

JOSH: Which is the good news.

HRISHI: Do you know what the numbers were in the budget?

JOSH: I believe it said the NEA, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the NEH, the National Endowment for the Humanities, are each being funded through September to the tune of 150 million a year, each. Which, when you consider that we are a country of 300 million-plus people, is not a lot of money.

HRISHI: Yes. Here's something about the NEA that I think is interesting. You know, like it's an example of federal funding where it gets distributed to states and the NEA doesn't actually tell the states what they have to do. For proponents of states' rights, you know, this is an example of where the money comes from the government, but then the states get to decide how they want to distribute it. People in California might have different things that they want to fund than the state government in Kentucky, and it is up to the state to do that. There's a sense, I think, that the NEA is Washington DC giving out money to objectionable creative pursuits, but it's actually not. That's not actually how the mechanism works.

JOSH: Right. Go lobby your state about what kind of art you want the money to go to rather than perhaps arguing against money going to the arts.

HRISHI: Yeah. I found an article in the *Post* that said, "Although all states would suffer under the proposed Budget," this is back from March when Trump was trying to cut the NEA Budget – "Although all the states would suffer under the proposed budget, poor and rural communities would be hardest hit according to the national assembly of state arts agencies, because about 25 percent of NEA funds go to rural communities and 54 percent go to low income areas."

JOSH: Right, I think that is [clears throat] another misapprehension about the NEA, is that it's taxpayer money going to fund artistic atrocities for rich people, and in fact, it gets art into the inner cities and into rural areas.

HRISHI: Yeah. Now maybe it's moot because we know what the budget actually turned out to be, but I'll put a link to that *Post* article on the site.

JOSH: Sure. It's also, you know, that always gets off the... I wanted to hear the argument here from Aaron because he would articulate it so well about what the arts do for kids and adults

going into STEM areas and you know, science and math and there's all kinds of research to suggest that the opening up of one's creativity in an artistic area nourishes the other parts of your brain and...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Right

JOSH: ...via thought processes in other endeavors.

HRISHI: Right, creativity is such huge part of engineering and science and being able to think critically, and to imagine that you could get rid of one and still have the others exist as richly... I mean it's the whole... it undermines that whole notion of a liberal arts education.

JOSH: Indeed, it's fun to observe Aaron having fun creating artistic projects for this woman to complain about. One of them involving Rottweiler dung...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

CONGRESSWOMAN: "Hold the Lettuce." Lydia Benedict's two bacon cheeseburgers were constructed from pieces of burlap and Rottweiler dung.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [Laughter] I thought it was funny.

HRISHI: So, you wanted Aaron to articulate that more, beyond Toby's line.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

TOBY: There is a connection between a progress of a society and progress in the arts. The age of Pericles was also the age of Phidias. The age of Lorenzo de Medici was also the age of Leonardo da Vinci. The age of Elizabeth was the age of Shakespeare.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes, but Toby of all people with this stuff just ready to go... I was like, really?

HRISHI: It's interesting. The line of Toby's is actually a quote from JFK.

JOSH: I did not know that.

HRISHI: Yeah. This a letter that JFK wrote to the publisher of Musical America in 1960 and the line from that letter is, "There is a connection. Hard to explain logically, but easy to feel, between achievement in public life and progress in the arts. The age of Pericles was also the age of Phidias. The age of Lorenzo de Medici was also the age of Leonardo da Vinci. The age of Elizabeth, also the age of Shakespeare, and the new frontier for which I campaigned in public life can also be a new frontier for American art." So, you know, that middle section is lifted directly from that letter and put into Toby's dialogue.

JOSH: Interesting. How did you come upon that?

HRISHI: I google frequently while I'm watching the show. There are things where I'm like, "Oh, what do I... I want to know more about this."

JOSH: By the way. just your mention of the phrase "new frontier" just reminds me of the great Donald Fagen song, "New Frontier", which phrase he stole from Kennedy.

HRISHI: Oh really?

["New Frontier" by Don Fagen excerpt]

DONALD FAGEN: The key word is survival on the new frontier...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: From the album *The Night Fly*

HRISHI: Hmm. He stole that from Kennedy?

JOSH: I believe so or...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] That's cool.

JOSH: I've always assumed so.

HRISHI: Well, new frontier reminds me of the final frontier.

JOSH: Which you stole from *Star Trek*.

HRISHI: This is my segue into *Star Trek*. There's a deep *Star Trek* reference in this episode, again this is something I don't know about because I don't know *Star Trek* very well, but I discovered through research for this episode while just like, googling different things. You know when it turns out that the *Portland* has gone quiet, when they get communication back up from them, you hear the *Portland* say...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

SOLIDER: Went deep and quiet to avoid close aboard contact with Luda-Class destroyer...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes? Is that something from *Star Trek*?

HRISHI: That's from *Star Trek*. These science, Starfleet ships.

JOSH: That's fantastic. I wonder if that's somebody on Aaron's staff? I don't think he's a big Trekkie, Aaron, is he?

HRISHI: I don't know, but somebody...

JOSH: Slipped that in.

HRISHI: And I thought that was a great, very subtle reference. It made me want to bring up something that we haven't talked about, but I think is also a really cool Easter egg going the other way around. Do you know that on *Star Trek: Voyager*, there's a great *West Wing* Easter egg?

JOSH: Oh, where they list the names of the crew?

HRISHI: Yes, as people who have died. There's a graphic in the background of deceased crew members and...

JOSH: I think people have tweeted that photo to me. It's fantastic.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's all *West Wing* staff members. Did they misspell Bartlet? I feel like there maybe... I've noticed that too...I need to look at it again though.

HRISHI: They do. They spell Bartlet with three Ts, instead of two.

JOSH: Boom.

HRISHI: But yeah, it's Commander J. Bartlett, Lieutenant Commander L. McGarry, Lieutenant Commander T Ziegler.

JOSH: Fantastic.

HRISHI: And so, I found an article about this, with an interview from the Graphic Art Supervisor on *Slate*. Mike Okuda, who's the Graphic Art Supervisor said, "Some of us in the art department were big *West Wing* fans. We used to joke that *The West Wing*, with its close-knit family of characters on an idealistic mission, should've been a *Star Trek* spin off."

JOSH: Ha.

HRISHI: [Reading] "However, one of my jokes... one of my rules regarding jokes, was that they should never be apparent to the casual viewer. If they were, they would yank the viewer out of the story and that would be a serious disservice to both. For this reason, I generally tried to keep the text on such gags at the ragged edge of legibility."

JOSH: That's great.

HRISHI: "That text went by on the screen pretty quickly, and was thus, unlikely to catch the viewer's eye." So, in a similar vein, the Luna-class thing is not something that you would ever pay attention to, but if somebody happened to know, they could get a little extra giggle from it.

JOSH: That's fantastic. Do you know when that, the crew member thing that happened on *Voyager*. What would the time frame be? There's no way this is a response to that?

HRISHI: It was from the episode, "Imperfection" of *Voyager*, which came before, it was from October 2000.

JOSH: So, this could be a response.

HRISHI: It could be.

JOSH: I think we've discovered something, I think it was a little nod back to the *Voyager* people from *The West Wing* writers.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Back to the...that would be great.

JOSH: That would be great.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: By the way, did you point out that the phrase "new frontier" was used by JFK in his 1960 presidential acceptance speech?

HRISHI: No, I did not.

[JFK acceptance speech excerpt]

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: And we stand today, on the edge of a new frontier. The frontier of the 1960s. The frontier of unknown opportunities and perils. The frontier of unfilled hopes, and unfilled threats.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ok, so that's where it's from and we'll link to it, because I do love that Don Fagen song, which kind of riffs on the whole idea of the '60s being the new frontier and this references to bomb shelters and it's a great, great song.

HRISHI: Yeah. I'm gonna now use this opportunity to go from another *Star Trek - West Wing* crossover. Al Kiefer...

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: ...Who played Q.

JOSH: Q? Right.

HRISHI: Al Kiefer, remember, in "Mandatory Minimums", Sam called him...

[West Wing Episode 1.20 excerpt]

SAM: Mr. Good News, Happy Guy.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [Laughs] Oh, right.

HRISHI: And then in this episode, the president calls Albie Duncan...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Mr. Happy Fun Guy.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's right. I like how they're lit, I like when they remove themselves from the Oval Office, Leo and Bartlet, and they have a little discussion just in the doorway and they're barely lit, they're almost like, in the dark. It's just kind of, I don't know, I like the lighting choice there.

HRISHI: Yeah, it was de-light-ful.

JOSH: Boom.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Josh, do watch *Last Man on Earth*?

JOSH: Oh, do I love that show.

HRISHI: I was thinking about it because when [laughs]...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Because I say, "boom", a lot?

HRISHI: ...You tweeted... You say boom a lot, but when you tweeted the other day, someone was like, "Well, I hope Josh Malina writes my obituary for me," and you wrote, "She dead..."

JOSH: Does that feel like a *Last Man on Earth*?

HRISHI: Do you remember that? Like, that's what Will Forte will often say. He dead.

JOSH: He dead? Well then, I'm sure it was a subconscious steal from Will Forte, because I love, love, love that show. And...

HRISHI: Me, too.

JOSH: ...I think that's why I say boom a lot now.

HRISHI: Yeah, yeah. It's so good.

JOSH: Interesting, I don't know that I would have predicted that would be a Hrishi favorite. I don't know, you're hard to pin down, I'll give you that.

HRISHI: Yeah?

JOSH: You're a complicated, layered man. Yeah, I love that show, I think it's underrated.

HRISHI: I think so too. I only recently got into it.

JOSH: As long as we're now just randomly talking about TV, do you watch *Catastrophe*?

HRISHI: I just finished the third season on Friday. I watched the entire, I watched two episodes one night and then like four episodes on Friday night.

JOSH: Yeah, I sick-binged it, too. To the point where I'm mad at myself because now I probably have to wait a year to see the next.

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: How great is it?

HRISHI: It's so great, and both of these shows are shows that I've watched entire... every episode of this year. I only got into *Last Man on Earth* a few, you know, maybe a month ago.

JOSH: Ah, I love that show. I am blown away by *Catastrophe*, by how good it is and how each subsequent season seems to get richer and deeper, without losing any of the funny and ooh, is it well done. Sharon Horgan and Rob Delaney, hat tip to them both. And I think it is, although the critics have lavished great praise on it, I think it is under-watched, and I really strongly recommend that everybody listening right now go and watch it if you haven't watched the first season. It will hook you.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's great.

[ad break]

JOSH: We're back to the episode, I want... this is what I wanted to say. Did the House Majority Leader's response to what I consider a fairly softball question for someone considering running for the Office of President of the United States, his response is very funny, that C.J. reads back.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

C.J.: The reason I would run, were I to run, is I have a great belief in this country as a country, and in these people as people that go into making this country a nation, with the greatest natural resources and population of people, educated people.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It put me in mind of, I'm sure you've seen this, the classic misfire of a Miss Teen USA contestant.

HRISHI: Oh, Miss South Carolina, right?

JOSH: Miss South Carolina, very good.

[Miss Teen USA excerpt]

MISS SOUTH CAROLINA: I personally believe that US Americans are unable to do so because some people out there in our nation don't have maps, and I believe that our education, like such as South Africa and the Iraq everywhere, like such as, and I believe that they should...our education over here in the US, should help the US, or should the help South Africa and the Iraq and the Asian countries, so we will be able to build up our future.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I thought, well this is actually disturbingly similar. Just complete incoherence.

HRISHI: I would love it if someone would cut together a video of the actual Majority Leader, Kevin McCarthy, if they could find enough speeches of his where they could cut together a montage of him delivering Miss South Carolina's answer. That would be hilarious and I will send you a lapel pin if you do it.

JOSH: Nice. Make it so.

HRISHI: Oh. Speaking of *Star Trek*.

JOSH: Right. I can, I can play the game a little bit [laughter]. I love the, also... just to get back to the NEA scene, I like when Sam walks in...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

CONGRESSWOMAN: You funded his performance piece recently, which involved him destroying all his belongings outside a Starbucks at Haight-Ashbury.

SAM: I've done that a couple times. I didn't know there was funding available.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: It's a very, very funny couple of lines, and very well delivered by Rob Lowe.

HRISHI: Yep, I was just writing down all of the moments that made me chuckle. Like the look from the president made me laugh so hard I actually... it made me cackle, full on. But that, "I didn't know there was funding", I'd written down as a line that made me laugh. Also, Nancy telling Leo to settle down, at the beginning

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

LEO: When's that day gonna come Nancy, when's that gonna happen?

NANCY: Settle down.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I tifoled more than couple times this episode.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Another one I had written down was when the president, again, just desperate for having any kind of authority at all in the room with Albie Duncan says, "Casus belli", and he jumps in, and says to Leo...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

ALBIE: You've got casus belli?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Cause for war. Little thing called Latin.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: Again, could've been a line from Will Forte in *Last Man on Earth* [laughs].

JOSH: That's true. "Little thing called Latin," boom [laughs].

HRISHI: Boom.

JOSH: Is that how it's pronounced? Is it not "ca-sus bell-ee"? I did write that down, but I haven't bothered to google it.

HRISHI: I think that you can say, "bell-eye" instead of "bell-ee", but there's no U. It's not, "causes"; it's "ca-sus".

JOSH: Did you ever take Latin?

HRISHI: I never took Latin, so I don't actually know what I'm talking about, but you know, it's never stopped us before [laughs].

JOSH: No, exactly, are you kidding? We'd have to go back and redo every episode if that's the criterion. I wish I had taken it in high school. It was offered in my high school, I'm sure it was at yours as well.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Uh huh.

JOSH: Because you went to a swanky boarding school, and I regret it. I regret not taking Latin.

HRISHI: I regret so many things I could've done if I had paid more attention in school.

JOSH: Do you? I'm delighted to hear that.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I hate when people say, "I have no regrets." I'm like, "How's that possible?" So, in that scene, however it's pronounced, that was my second Trump-ai-yi-yi moment.

HRISHI: The casus belli?

JOSH: Yes. Appreciating that Albie Duncan, Leo, and the president would be concerned with the potential provocation of North Korea, when our own President Donald Trump has recently said things like, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will," and "North Korea's a problem; the problem will be taken care of".

HRISHI: [cross talk] Mm Hmm.

JOSH: And then, not long after suggesting that he'd be also happy to welcome Kim Jong Un to the White House, so [laughs]...

HRISHI: I mean again, it goes to that the question we asked Ambassador Pressman. Is it crazy to invite your potential enemies to the White House? I thought, maybe that's a good idea, you know like, sit down with Kim Jong Un and sit down with someone like, Duterte and try and reason with them. Say, "You're my guys and there's nothing I wouldn't do for you."

JOSH: [Laughs] That is funny.

HRISHI: I also laughed at the exchange between Josh and the President when he says...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

JOSH: Why do you want to be President?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I don't.

JOSH: Well, we'll put that in a hopper and show you a draft.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Good.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [Laughs] Do you have any questions as to whether the president could, off the top of his head, come up with a rather eloquent, and moving response? The idea that they're sitting trying to compose a decent Bartlet response seemed odd to me.

HRISHI: Yeah. I imagine that they would do something where they throw a bunch of stuff at him...

JOSH: And he would just crush it off the top of his head. Extemporaneously crush that one out of the park.

HRISHI: Yeah. Although I think if the idea is to have a succinct answer, he might have some trouble.

JOSH: That's true. Right, yeah, give me the two-line version.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: We haven't discussed Gail's fishbowl in quite a while. We've found meatier ways into most of these episodes, but...

HRISHI: [cross talk] yeah much like Armageddon, we have found "meteor" ways in [sound of speeding plane].

JOSH: Wow. That's good. That is funny, that is clever. If I were an average person I would be laughing out loud. Props on the stunning speed of that joke.

HRISHI: But there is one, there's a fishbowl moment here, right?

JOSH: Yes. Well, there's a Bartlet campaign button in Gail's fishbowl this episode. But you gotta wonder, no submarine?

HRISHI: Right, I mean...

JOSH: Come on.

HRISHI: Maybe it's too easy?

JOSH: I guess, perhaps it was too on the nose.

HRISHI: Mm hmm, do you call the front of a submarine the nose?

JOSH: I was just trying to think of a goldfish nose, what do you call that [laughs]? Now it's just basically... this podcast has degenerated into a race to the nearest dad joke [laughs].

HRISHI: Like a submarine, we're going as quickly as we can to the bottom.

JOSH: Oh dear.

HRISHI: Don't submarines have noses? Have I seen too many Pixar movies?

JOSH: You know, I don't know, do goldfish have noses?

HRISHI: Snouts?

JOSH: Snout, perhaps.

HRISHI: Fish nose is quite the delicacy, I hear. Actually, it's on the new Blue Apron [laughter].

JOSH: Yeah?

HRISHI: Fish nose with rigatoni and pumpkin balls.

JOSH: [Laughter] Falina pilado [sic].

HRISHI: Fontina panini.

JOSH: Fish nose fontina panini, or paninis.

HRISHI: But yeah, there was a campaign button. In "War Crimes," there was another Gail's fishbowl moment. There were American flags in the fishbowl, perhaps for the International War Crimes Tribunal.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: Maybe. Or maybe that was just a generic gimme. But yeah, there's a Bartlet campaign button, and it brings to me to the question that I had about the campaign workshop being done in the White House in this episode.

JOSH: Which we have not discussed yet, really.

HRISHI: No. Yeah, Sam and Bruno and Connie have this meeting about soft money, and I was wondering about the ethics of that, or maybe even the legality of that. About, you know, a staffer working for the campaign. You know Jim Messina, who was Deputy Chief of Staff, right?

JOSH: This is before he hooked up with Kenny Loggins...

[Loggins & Messina, "Your Mamma Don't Dance" song excerpt]

LOGGINS & MESSINA: All because your mamma don't dance and your daddy don't rock and roll...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Jim Messina was the Deputy Chief of Staff under Obama, and then he left to run the 2012 reelection campaign, but he stepped down from his position. And there was some stuff around that time about... and the headquarters were in Chicago, but there's obviously a division of people working on the reelection campaign in the White House itself. There's an article in *Politico* about this called, "Campaigning in the White House," and there was this quote, "No laws prohibit the president or senior West Wing officials from engaging in electoral activity during their day jobs, although the 1930s era Hatch Act prohibits them from using government resources to do so or to fundraise in US government offices. Most federal workers, including white house staff, are allowed to politic during their off hours, but not while at work".

JOSH: I could be arguing in my spare time.

HRISHI: Right, I was wondering if that... so Sam, kind of, splitting his time doing both, if that was...

JOSH: Kosher?

HRISHI: Yeah if that wasn't a murky, not necessarily kosher, area.

JOSH: I'm not sure I bought that Toby's idea was revelatory. That rather than do an end run around the prohibition for a candidate spot by avoiding the magic words that we actually make issues ads.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's kind of like, 'That didn't occur to you guys? Like, we're allowed to make issue ads, why don't we make issue ads?'

HRISHI: Yeah. I guess, maybe because of the response of the soft money that was actually going directly after the president, putting his face on there with a red X on it.

JOSH: Right. That they felt the natural response would be put him out in a positive light, I guess so.

HRISHI: Right. That was one where I'm like, eh, it's a TV show.

JOSH: Yeah, fair enough. Explain it to me.

HRISHI: I know this goes back to the comic subplot that you did not like, but I did chuckle at Leo saying...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

LEO: The USS Portland is a Seawolf-class, or a big nuclear submarine.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Nothing for you?

JOSH: Well, no it was, you know, I had to wear two different hats.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Funny within this new world they proposed for this single episode, but problematic to me as an overall *West Wing* viewer.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's one moment, one directorial moment that I liked, which was at the end of Leo's first scene in the Sit Room. He walks out, and the camera's following him, tracing to the right and it transitions, it dissolves from that to outside of the Oval Office and the camera continues moving at sort of this similar pace and stops on the president looking out the window to the helicopter and I just thought that was a really... a nice, beautiful visual move.

JOSH: I agree.

HRISHI: When the President says to Charlie...

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: You're pretty mouthy today.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I thought that was true for the whole episode.

JOSH: Charlie himself?

HRISHI: Like the whole episode of *The West Wing* itself was-

JOSH: Mouthy

HRISHI: Pretty, yeah mouthy.

JOSH: Mouthy. Yeah, you're right.

HRISHI: I'd seen a quote from Dee Dee Meyers, saying that she always had objections for Aaron whenever people who worked for the president would kind of... take those kinds of liberties. She felt like that was not realistic and there are lines that you didn't cross, and that kind of dynamic, as entertaining as I found it and as heartwarming as I find it, she was like, that doesn't really happen.

JOSH: That's intriguing, and I think *The West Wing* the television show would be quite the less for it if they removed that kind of interaction between Bartlet and his staff.

HRISHI: Yeah. The First Lady is wheelchair-bound in this episode.

JOSH: Correct.

HRISHI: That's because Stockard Channing really did injure her foot.

JOSH: Huh, interesting.

HRISHI: We didn't really talk about Hal Holbrook as Albie Duncan.

JOSH: As Mark Twain. Hal Holbrook, for some reason, well not for some reason. Hal Holbrook spent much of his life playing Mark Twain, and doing a one-man show. And every time I see him, no matter what role he's playing, he's a terrific actor, I just think, "Oh, that's Mark Twain".

HRISHI: Well, there's another little Easter egg in this episode, little inside joke.

[West Wing Episode 3.06 excerpt]

ALBIE: 1968, the USS Pueblo on an intelligence mission off the DPRK. North Korea attacks with vessels and a MiG jet.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: If you look on his IMDB, you will find a listing in 1973 for the TV movie *Pueblo*. He played the captain of the *Pueblo*.

JOSH: In that movie?

HRISHI: Yeah. It's a movie about the *USS Pueblo*, the American spy ship captured by North Korea.

JOSH: That's delightful.

HRISHI: So, when he says, "I was there..."

JOSH: He was.

HRISHI: And he won an Emmy for it, I think.

JOSH: That's great, I love that.

HRISHI: Yeah. Also, apparently Aaron had posted at one point on Television Without Pity, "If you ask most people around here, they'd tell you "Gone Quiet" was the weakest show we've done. It was the only episode that *USA Today* has liked this season. I'm mentioning this because of the very unscientific yardsticks by which we measure how much the public enjoyed a particular episode, places "Night Five" among the top five we've ever done. A lot of us agree, including me I'm afraid. Does that make someone wrong for not liking it? Of course not."

JOSH: Interesting. Was this Aaron posting as Benjamin, or as Aaron Sorkin?

HRISHI: Yeah, as Benjamin.

JOSH: Huh. Why was he making that point? In response to what?

HRISHI: I don't know.

JOSH: Interesting. Well, I would award that title to "Isaac and Ishmael", but I don't disagree that this is lesser *West Wing*, and for me that's in large part because of the rejiggering of President Bartlet that I don't like.

HRISHI: Mm hmm. If you're still with us, thanks for listening [laughter], thanks for enduring, thanks for trusting Captain Josh Malina. Thanks for trusting the crew, me, Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: The West Wing Weekly was made with the help of Zack McNees and Margaret Miller.

HRISHI: And you can find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We're @TheWestWingWeekly on most of those places, except for Twitter, where we're @WestWingWeekly

JOSH: I like how were not spoon-feeding people any more.

HRISHI: No, they know.

JOSH: You wanna talk to us, you want talk about us, you wanna leave a comment, you gotta do four seconds of research. Here's a link we will give you in its entirety. If you would like to support the endeavor that is The West Wing Weekly by purchasing some of our fine products designed by Hrishikesh Hirway, you can go to thewestwingweekly.com/merch.

HRISHI: Buy a pin, post a picture, #bartletsarmy.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: I'm working on a Bartlet's Army t-shirt design.

JOSH: Are you really? That's a great idea.

HRISHI: In my mind.

JOSH: Fantastic. The West Wing Weekly is a proud member of Radiotopia, a curated selection of some of the finest podcasts to be had.

HRISHI: To learn more, go to radiotopia.fm... Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: What's next?

[Outro Music]